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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 005241

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TAGS: [1Z](#) [KU](#) [OREP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: (U) CODEL ISSA MEETS KUWAITI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SPEAKER AND MEMBERS

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reason 1.5
(d)

[11](#). (C) Summary: Codel Issa met with the Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly, Mr. Jassem Al-Khorafi, and other MP's on November 25, 2002. Among the topics discussed were Kuwait's concerns over the U.S.-Saudi relationship, a post-Saddam Iraq and the impact of U.S. policies in Israel and the territories on Arab support for U.S. policy initiatives in the region. End Summary.

Khorafi to Codel: You need the Saudis

[12](#). (C) Speaker Khorafi advised Codel Issa that the Congress should play a larger and more proactive role in "cementing" the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. "The U.S. has become famous for losing friends and gaining enemies," he said, as he urged the members of the delegation to "please keep them as allies." He said that Kuwait is very concerned about the "irritants" to which Saudi Arabia had been exposed over the past few months, and asked the Codel to work to ensure there was no further deterioration of the relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. In particular, Khorafi noted what he felt was unfair U.S. media coverage of Saudi Arabia. While he thanked the USG for making a clear and public distinction between Islam and terrorist activities, he expressed his belief that negative media reports emanating from the U.S. were confusing Arab perceptions and damaging the relationship between the two countries.

[13](#). (C) Responding to Speaker Khorafi's concerns, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) replied that the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia was still very strong, despite media reports, and noted that unflattering coverage was a burden societies that enjoy a free press sometimes have to bear. He added that he believed the U.S. public capable of distinguishing between fact and press speculation. Rep. William Delahunt (D-MA) added that the benefits of a free press outweigh the trouble that comes along with it. He noted that Al-Jazeera is "a test for Arab states," which have limited experience with a truly free press.

Israel and Palestine

[14](#). (C) Khorafi also used the opportunity to address Kuwaiti concerns over U.S. policy on Israel/Palestine. He said that while Kuwait was eager to see peace finalized, Israel was not committed to finding a peaceful solution. Sharon's actions, he said "will only create more extremists" and produce an environment where the two parties "cannot sit at the table to find a solution." At the same time, he said, "dictators" in the Arab world were keen on having Israel serve as a scapegoat to ensure their continued existence. He called upon the U.S. to confound dictators by solving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

[15](#). (C) While thanking the U.S. for its commitment to a two-state solution to the conflict, Khorafi was also critical of U.S. demands that the Palestinians elect new leadership. He observed that Kuwait had suffered as a result of Palestinian policies, but nonetheless the U.S. should "leave it to them to decide" their own leadership, or face the prospect of "embarrassing" those who support the U.S. push for change, but do not want to be seen as "puppets of the U.S."

[16](#). (C) Rep. Issa responded by remarking that Congress is committed to pushing both parties towards a solution and reminded the Speaker that President Bush explicitly supported a Palestinian state. Rep. Delahunt added his belief that the solution to the Palestinian problem lay not in U.S. action, but in increased action on the part of Arab states including Kuwait. He called on Kuwait to play a more active role.

Guantanamo detainees

[17](#). (C) Turning to the well-publicized issue of Kuwaiti detainees at Guantanamo, Khorafi said the U.S. should give them "every opportunity provided under international law," decide if they are guilty or not, and then take the appropriate action. He added that Kuwait would stand by any decision the USG made.

18. (C) Rep. Issa explained that while the U.S. was in uncharted waters, and taking new actions in response to new threats, he would work with Congress in an effort to find a sound solution as quickly as possible.

Concern over Oil Prices

19. (C) Islamist MP Nasser al-Sane voiced his concern that regime change in Iraq could lead to oil prices as low as five USD per barrel. He told Codel Issa that a British Petroleum analyst had quoted this price in a discussion over possible supply growth spurred by the development of Iraqi oil resources.

110. (C) Rep. Mike Rogers (R-MI) responded by assuring al-Sane that stable oil prices are in the economic interest of the entire world, including the United States, whose high-cost producers would be driven out of business by a precipitous drop in prices. Rep. Issa agreed, but told al-Sane that Kuwait would have to invest in the modernization of its oil sector if it wished to remain competitive. The Ambassador used this as an opportunity to stress the importance of early passage of legislation authorizing a foreign role in the development of Kuwait's Northern oil fields.

111. (C) Comment: That Speaker Khorafi chose to lead off his comments by focusing on Saudi Arabia reflects the extreme importance Kuwait attaches to its relations with both the US and Saudi Arabia, as the twin guarantors of its security.
End Comment.

112. (U) This cable was not cleared by Codel Issa.

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